# Wildflower Weekend 2013 Program Schedule

## Saturday, May 4

### Wildflower Identification for Beginners

9 to 11:30 a.m.

Learn to tell characteristics of different plant families on this gentle hike just off of Skyline Drive and along a short stretch of the Appalachian Trail. ½ mile.

Meet at Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8)

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger

Featured Program: "Wild About Shenandoah ~ From Wildflowers to Wildlife" 9:30 to 11 a.m.

An amazing variety of species depend on each other in the diverse habitats protected by the park. Half-hour Powerpoint program, followed by a discovery walk in the vicinity of the visitor center. ½ mile. Byrd Visitor Center auditorium (mile 51). Book signing opportunity from 9 to 9:30 a.m.

Ann and Rob Simpson, Guest Naturalists

Featured Program: "The New Flora of Virginia ~ What's in it for You?" 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

After 11 years of research, writing, editing and illustrating, the new *Flora of Virginia* is finally complete. Project co-founder Chris Ludwig will provide a detailed look into the new comprehensive manual of all the plants found in the state, and will explain how to use it with maximum effectiveness. If you have a copy, bring it along. Byrd Visitor Center auditorium (mile 51).

J. Christopher Ludwig, Chief Biologist, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

### Stony Man "Rocks"

1 to 3 p.m.

Seek out woodland wildflowers as you hike to the summit of Stony Man Mountain (elev. 4,010 ft.) to learn about unusual plants found at high-elevation rock outcrops. 1.6 mi. Elevation change: about 340 ft. Meet at Stony Man Nature Trail parking area (mile 41.7, north entrance to Skyland Resort). Cathy Mayes and Adele Baker, Virginia Native Plant Society, Old Rag Master Naturalists

## **Marvelous Millers Head**

1:30 to 4:30

Look for uncommon plants as you hike down a rocky ridge to an observation platform and view of the Shenandoah Valley. Very steep in places, with uphill return. 1.5 miles. Elevation change: about 250 ft. Meet at Millers Head trailhead: from Skyline Drive, turn into **south** entrance of Skyland (mile 42.5), pass stables, and keep to left when road forks. Park at top of hill, near amphitheater. *Mara Meisel, Park Ranger* 

# **Franklin Cliffs Stroll**

2 to 3 p.m.

You may be surprised at the variety of wildflowers you can see just a few steps from your car. Look for woodland flowers by the parking lot, then take a short walk onto the cliffs in search of moss phlox and others. ½ mi. Meet at Franklin Cliffs Overlook (mile 49).

Ann and Rob Simpson, Guest Naturalists

Featured Program: "Rare Plants of Shenandoah National Park" 4 to 4:45 p.m.

Have you ever seen mountain sandwort? Swordleaf phlox? Because of its varied terrain, geologic and other conditions, Shenandoah National Park harbors many rare and uncommon plants and communities. Through this Powerpoint program, discover unusual habitats and species that benefit from protection here. Byrd Visitor Center auditorium (mile 51).

J. Christopher Ludwig, Chief Biologist, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

### Sunday, May 5

#### **Spring Birds**

8:30 to 11 a.m.

Wood thrushes, warblers and other migratory birds are often attracted to the springs and surrounding forest here. Mostly gentle with some short, very steep places. ½-mile loop. Meet at Gravel Springs Gap (mile 17.6). Limited parking.

Alan Williams, Park Ecologist

### **Wonders of the Mill Prong**

9 a.m. to noon

Follow a splashing stream to see how wildflowers and trees tell a story of the changing forest. 2 miles. Elevation change: about 400 ft. Meet at Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8). *Tom Dierauf, Guest Naturalist* 

#### \*Little Stony Man Cliffs

9 a.m. to noon

There's a chance to see some uncommon wildflowers as you hike up a rocky section of the Appalachian Trail to a beautiful view of the Shenandoah Valley from the base of the cliffs. 1.5 mile. Elevation change: about 360 ft. Meet at the south end of Stony Man Mountain Overlook (mile 38.6). [NOTE: This is not Stony Man Nature Trail parking area at Skyland, but 3 miles farther north on Skyline Drive. Do not park at the much smaller Little Stony Man parking area at mile 39.1]. Mara Meisel, Park Ranger

#### Featured Program: Lure of the Limberlost

10 to 11:30 a.m.

Search for spring flowers on this gentle trail through a forest that has undergone major changes in recent years. Along the way, pick up some tips to help you take fantastic nature photos. 1 mile, at most. Meet at Limberlost parking area (mile 43). **Limited parking.** 

Ann and Rob Simpson, Professional Photographers and Naturalists

#### **Appalachian Trail Beauties**

1:30 to 4 p.m.

The AT usually hosts a wide variety of native woodland flowers, from trillium to wild geranium, and sometimes has a few surprises! 1.5 miles. Elevation change: about 185 ft. Meet a Lewis Mountain picnic area (mile 57.5).

Mara Meisel, Park Ranger

#### \*Denotes new program this year

Length of trail listed is for entire hike. Elevation changes of less than 70 feet are not included.

## Special Opportunity

<u>Saturday Only: Be a Garlic Mustard Buster!</u> Here's your chance to help the park's native wildflowers by volunteering to pull up invasive garlic mustard. This exotic plant is taking over native habitat in many places. You must be registered to participate, and may only pick garlic mustard in the company of the park volunteer coordinator on designated hikes. Litter bags and gloves will be provided. No garden tools are needed. Come dressed for working outdoors (long pants, closed-toe shoes, hat, sunscreen, etc.). Bring water and snack.

- Stony Man Nature Trail parking area (mile 41.7): registration 8 to 9 a.m., activity 9-11 a.m.
- Milam Gap parking area (mile 52.8): registration noon to 1 p.m., activity 1-3 p.m.

### Reminders

- Wear sturdy shoes and bring water on all hikes.
- Evaluate your personal fitness and health to choose an appropriate program.
- Come prepared for wet weather. Walks may be conducted in light rain, but will be canceled in case of thunderstorms.
- Learn more about Shenandoah's wildflowers at the park's website: www.nps.gov/shen

More than 850 species of flowering plants are found in Shenandoah National Park. About 70% of them are native. Many native woodland wildflowers thrive in the dappled forest sunlight of springtime. They race to bloom and attract pollinators before overhead trees become fully leafed out, and shade engulfs them. Hot summer sunshine is too strong for them. Now is their time.

Please help to ensure that wildflowers will be around for generations by leaving them unharmed. A flower that is picked can miss a chance to spread thousands of seeds. A plant that is dug up is gone forever, and the loss affects all things connected to it. If you love them, leave them.

"Everything is blooming most recklessly. If it were voices instead of colors, there would be an unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night."

~ Rainer Maria Rilke

## Meet Our Volunteer Naturalists

**Adele Baker** is a certified Virginia Master Naturalist. As part of her volunteer work with Old Rag Master Naturalists and Shenandoah National Park, she monitors the rock outcrop on Stony Man summit and its indigenous rare plants. Adele is past board member of Old Rag Master Naturalists and the Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation. She is a current board member of the Shenandoah National Park Association.

**Tom Dierauf** is a retired forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry. He was on the advisory board of the Flora of Virginia project, and helped to compile plant taxon descriptions for the Flora. He has enjoyed hiking, backcountry camping, fishing and discovering wildflowers in Shenandoah for more than 40 years.

**J. Christopher Ludwig** has been with the Division of Natural Heritage, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, since 1988. As staff botanist, he traversed the state in search of rare plants and significant conservation sites. Since 1998, he has served as the chief biologist, directing a team of botanists, zoologists and ecologists in their quest to identify all of the rare species populations and significant natural communities in the state. In 2001, he co-founded the Flora of Virginia Foundation, formed to produce the first modern manual of the vascular flora in Virginia. It was published in December 2012.

**Catherine Mayes** is treasurer of the Virginia Native Plant Society and its Piedmont chapter. She is a certified Master Naturalist and education chair for Old Rag Master Naturalists. Cathy is secretary of The American Chestnut Foundation and chairman of its Virginia chapter. Through the park's Adopt-an-Outcrop program, she helps protect the fragile ecosystem on Stony Man summit.

Ann and Rob Simpson teach at Lord Fairfax Community College. Ann is program leader for the science department, teaching general biology, anatomy and physiology, and nature photography. Rob is professor of natural resources, teaches general and field biology, and is program head of the nature and outdoor photography curriculum. Their books include *Shenandoah National Park: Simply Beautiful* and *Wildflowers of Shenandoah National Park.* One of their current projects is a pocket nature guide to Shenandoah.